The Reformed Journal

ume 5 — No. 7 | A Periodical of Reformed Comment and Opinion | July-August, 1955

S.F.T.S LIBRARY

The Tyranny of Things

A Challenge to the Schools

by LEWIS B. SMEDES*

If I were to draw a picture to symbolize the most dangerous traitor to human freedom, I would not draw a man in the guise of a Communist spy. I would draw a picture of a grotesque figure with only a large stomach and a pair of protruding hands, a man without a head and without a heart. The most dangerous foe of freedom today is the creature with only a stomach and hands. I would not picture this rascal in the back alleys of conspiracy. I would put him in the setting of a chamber of commerce, the university, or perhaps the pew of a respectable church. He is not a Communist, though his spirit is a near kin of the Communist spirit — both are dedicated to the reduction of the human person to the dimension of things. He wants to mold man in his own image, the image of a figure without a heart and head. He would not blast off a man's head with a hand grenade or cut out his heart with a dagger. His weapon is *things*. He wants to shrink man to the dimension of *things*; and he uses *things* to do the job. When things have relieved man of his head and heart, man is a slave.

The enemy, then, is the creature without a head and heart. He is the man of the big stomach and the big hands. The stomach is the symbol of the consumption of things. The hands are the symbol of the making of things. The enemy is trying to mold men into the makers and consumers of things, the manufacturers and the users of things, the sellers and the buyers and the owners of things.

The head is the symbol of thought; the discernment between the truth and the lie, the right and the wrong, the good and the bad. The heart is the symbol of belief: belief in God, belief in Truth, belief in the institution of God on earth, belief in the big dimension of man. When the head and the heart are full grown, man is too big to fit into the pattern of *things*. He is what he was meant to be, the master of things. Things are his servant; things are not his lord. There is a line of demarcation between him and the things he makes and uses. But when the growth of head and heart are stunted, he shrinks to the dimension of things, and becomes their slave.

The enemy who threatens freedom seems to offer a pleasant promise of freedom through things. The more things a man has the more freedom he has. The man with automobiles and airplanes has freedom of movement. The man with a 21-inch TV set has freedom from boredom. The man with many gadgets has freedom from drudgery. The man with a mortgage-free house has freedom from anxiety. The man with a large bank account has freedom of power. Who can deny that things do offer a neat package of freedoms? But what of the *man*, the man who has become so dependent on things for his freedom that he has become a slave of them? What of the *man*, the man whose very life is measured by the number of things he has? What of the *man*, the man whose life is "so full of a number of things" that there is no room for what Jesus says is "more than" the body and the stomach?

* * *

The thoughtful European listener to America's propaganda may well suppose that America's greatness lies in her success at making and consuming an abundance of things. He is told, after all, that America is better

*Dr. Smedes is minister of the Madison Avenue Christian Reformed Church, Paterson, N. J. This article was originally given as an Independence Day address at Terrace Lake, N. J.

IN THIS ISSUE

The Tyranny of Things ..... *Lewis Smedes* 1
Here Is Thy Pound ..... *Harry Boer* 3
American Religious Characteristics .... *John Kromminga* 6
The Court's Role in Social Problems — II ..... *Wallace Waalkes, Jr.* 9
Science and Pure Reason ..... *Henry Stob* 12
Reserved for Celebration ..... *John Vriend* 13
Letters to the Journal 16

The Tyranny of Things — Continued

than Russia because her people have more bath-tubs, more cars, more paid vacations and more nylon hosiery than any other land. And a thoughtful American may well wonder whether it is the thing — the production and consumption of the thing — that has made America successful and whether the thing is turning on her people and making them slaves.

I suspect that the average American believes that a great land is a land with a high standard of living for most people. He thinks a good life is a life filled with things. He thinks a successful man is the man of distinction with a new car in the garage and a cottage at the beach. A wise man is the man who knows how to be nice to the right people, the people who pay off in things. Truth is information that helps him manipulate things and men (whom he slowly learns to view as things) to his own advantage. A good religion is the religion that gives him a comfortable feeling and offers a spiritual veneer to his real life of things. And a good education is the education that teaches his son to earn 10,000 dollars a year. Thus, he guages, measures, and judges life by the possession of things. He may pay lip service to the head and the heart, but he is unwittingly being molded in the image of the creature with only a stomach and two hands. What is frightening about all this is that the schools are being made collaborators in the betrayal of the head and the heart.

When education becomes a pass-port to a rich livelihood and schools become the hand-maidens of the man with only a stomach and hands, trouble is brewing. It is, naturally, not a bad thing that college graduates build good bridges: it is a good thing. It is not a bad thing that those who go to school are able to earn a "good living" when they are finished: this too is a good thing. It is not a bad thing that students learn to slap backs, heal bodies, and make gadgets with their hands. Nor is it a bad thing that college graduates are prosperous consumers. But it is a disastrous thing when students are not led into the life that is more than things made with the hands and consumed with the stomach. It is a disastrous thing, for when life is only the making and consuming of things the true dimension of man is lost and with it man's freedom is lost.

Two things happen to education as by-products when it becomes a machine that produces creatures with only stomachs and hands. First, there is a low bow to conformity. When things are the measure of a man's life, the plumb-line of Truth is neglected. The only other standard that remains is the standard of the crowd. Therefore, if the student is to be successful, he must be adjusted to the majority. The odd man is out. The Calvins and the Luthers, the non-conformists, are poorly adjusted personalities. Many a modern school would blush to graduate such mis-fits. As things tyrannize life, the opinion-formers of the crowd (or of the pace-setters of the crowd) are the Gestapo. Another by-product of thing-dominated education is — ironically — a sentimental concentration on personality. If a student is to be a success, rule number one is that he be a nice fellow, everybody's friend, the man of whom all men speak well. Personality is the premium: not character or truth or excellence of performance, but the glad hand, the social grace, the winsome smile. The man with only a stomach and hands may be an "awfully nice chap." He will also be a slave.

* * *

Since things are the weapon of the enemy of freedom, and since the object is to mold men in the image of the man with only stomach and hands, our strategy must be to concentrate on the head and the heart. It is the special calling of the Christian school to develop whole human beings, the creatures a little lower than the angels, endowed with power and glory, intended by the Creator to be the masters and not the servants of things. Christian education must concentrate on the head and the heart as well as on the stomach and hands, and thus produce whole men, too big to be the slaves of things.

It is, as Jesus said, Truth that makes us free. Truth is believed with the heart and understood with the head. Truth is the liberator. But Truth is hard to come by. Truth was so hard for us to come by that God had to stoop to earth and bring it. Truth is so hard to believe that it takes an act of the Spirit of God in our hearts to make it acceptable. Non-redemptive truth comes hard too. It is no kindness to a parent to let him suppose that proximity to books and class-rooms will mechanically inform his son or daughter with truth. It is no kindness to a student to let him presume that a diploma is the hall-mark of truth. Truth that makes men free is long in its getting. And before it sets men free it must become their master. The enemy gives slavery with a promise of freedom. Truth gives freedom with a demand for subservience.

This means that young children must begin with the mastery of the tools of learning: grammar, numbers, spelling — reading, writing, and arithmetic. They must be subjected to the freedom-giving servitude of the discipline of learning. And then they are equipped only to begin their exploration into truth. They must go on to master the great wonders of God's world through natural sciences. They must go on to learn the triumphs and failures of generations past through the mastery of history. They must learn something of the best that has been thought and written in the past through the mastery of language. Thus the head grows, and the man becomes a discerning critic of himself, of his age, of things. He looks at the present from the perspective of the ages. He is head as well as stomach and hands. And in that measure, he is free from things.

The Reformed Journal

VOLUME V NO. 7

JULY-AUGUST, 1955

A Periodical of Reformed Comment and Opinion

EDITORIAL BOARD

Dr. Harry R. Boer, Dr. James Daane, Dr. George Stob, Dr. Henry Stob, Dr. Henry Zylstra

Published each month by the Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co.

Subscription price: $2.00 per year

Entered as Second Class Matter at the Postoffice at Grand Rapids, Mich.

Address all subscriptions and communications to:

THE REFORMED JOURNAL
255 Jefferson Avenue, S. E.
Grand Rapids 3, Mich.

Coordinate with the development of the head must come what I like license to call the expansion of the heart. In the miracle of salvation, man's heart is opened to God. But then the Christian heart can remain small. Christian education must lead the student to commit himself in his heart to a life that is "more than" things. It must lead him to believe in, and live in the true dimension of the life of the person. It must lead him into dedication to a life that is bigger than the building of bridges, the healing of bodies, and the enjoyment of things. He must be led into freedom *from* things and freedom *for* service. Not only must he come to know something of his true dimension, but he must be led to a commitment to growth into that larger format. That is, he must be heart and head as well as stomach and hands. And in that measure he will hardly become the slave of things.

Christian education is pre-eminently qualified to make young people understand that they are free only under the watchful eye of the only truly Free Person, God the Almighty. Christian education can make young people understand that they have minds which must be open and obedient to truth under the Truth, the Word of God. Christian education can make young people critics of themselves and their society under the Great Critic, the Judge of the living and the dead. Christian education can lead young people into the life that is more than things, the life of freedom, the life of the whole man — heart, head, stomach, and hands.

When our most important freedom is lost, I do not believe that it will be lost to a political power. It will be lost as we fall to the subtle tyranny of things and allow ourselves to be molded into the image of the man with only stomach and hands. It will be lost when we have traded our minds and hearts for an abundance of things. When our greater heritage of freedom is lost, God will say: "Slaves, this night are thy heads and hearts required of thee. You have not learned that a man is a head and a heart as well as a stomach and hands. You have forgotten that a man's life is more than things. So it is with him who lays up things for himself, but has no freedom in God."

Here Is Thy Pound

by HARRY R. BOER

During the year 1954 the Christian Reformed Church, consisting of 466 congregations lying between the Atlantic and the Pacific in the United States and in Canada, baptized 243 adults. Seven classes, consisting of 107 congregations, baptized five adults or less each. Eight classes, consisting of 50 congregations, baptized between six and ten each. One classis registers no adult baptisms at all. These are highly depressing figures. They indicate the extent of our evangelistic impotence. It is true, we must not confuse adult baptisms with adult conversions. Many adults who turn to Christ were baptized as infants. How many of these were gained for the Christian Reformed Church during 1954, the 1955 *Yearbook* does not reveal. That they are not many everyone who is acquainted with the fruits of Christian reformed evangelism knows. Since there are many unbaptized men and women in our country the number of adults baptized during the past year gives a fair indication of the extent to which our evangelism is effective.

One would expect that these meager figures would have a humbling effect on the Church that has gathered them in. Undoubtedly the Rev. Wm. H. Brink expressed the thoughts of many when as guest editor of *The Banner* he voiced his disquiet and disappointment in an editorial some months ago.

One wonders, however, whether this reaction is representative of the Christian Reformed Church as a whole. As I move about the Church I distinctly gain the impression that it is not. There seems to be a great fear that the influx of large numbers of people into the Church from non-Reformed backgrounds will threaten our ecclesiastical and doctrinal integrity. For this reason we look askance at converts coming into the Church from the American world, although we welcome with open arms large numbers of Dutch immigrants. We should certainly do the latter. But are we right in doing the former?

The desire to safeguard the integrity of the Church is a necessary and a good desire. It is very well possible, however, that a good desire will find an illegitimate expression. The whole of missionary history testifies to this. Again and again methods have been followed which in their very nature precluded the prosecution of a fruitful evangelism. There were doubtless a lot of good intentions involved in the horrors of the Inquisition. The Methodistic manner of securing separation from the world by prohibiting smoking and drinking doubtless stemmed from a good desire. Few will dispute that the cutting up of Protestantism into hundreds of denominations and sects stemmed from the desire to protect the purity of the Church.

In all these efforts to serve the Lord according to one's lights the question is not only how sincere and well-meant our intentions are, but also, and more importantly, how *scriptural* we are. Is our fear that men and women who confess Christ from the heart but who do not have a Reformed, let alone a Christian Reformed, background will endanger our doctrinal and ecclesiastical integrity a *scriptural* fear? That is to say, *is it a fear that God honors?*

Quite apart from any scriptural injunction, one is inclined to call into question a policy of evangelism which secures less than one adult convert for baptism per individual congregation. Isn't there something wrong with such a poverty-stricken evangelism so far as its fruits are concerned? Is this due simply to our loyalty to the gospel and to the unwillingness of men to accede to Christ's demands? Could it not in large part be *our* fault because our evangelism is being conducted on wrong presuppositions? Have we perhaps applied standards which scripture does *not* apply and are we *therefore* evangelistically unfruitful?

This is a large question, and I wish at this point to look at only one aspect of it. There are those among us who are not unduly disturbed by the fact that *few* people come to Christ via the

Here Is Thy Pound — Continued

Christian Reformed Church. Is this unconcern a warranted unconcern? What does the Bible say about *numbers* in evangelism and what does it say about *standards* for entrance into the Church? We are very little concerned about the *quantities* of converts that enter the Church, but very much concerned about the *quality* of the relatively few who do. In how far are we on scriptural grounds in entertaining these attitudes?

* * *

THE book of Acts is a book which God gave us. It is an unspeakably precious documentation of the manner in which the early Church witnessed and expanded in the power of the Spirit. It records the Pentecost event which launched the Church on her missionary career. It is a book which is *normative* for our missionary *thinking*, our missionary *attitudes*, our missionary *approach*. Nevertheless, men who would not for a moment question the divine source and authority of Acts have completely disregarded its teachings in the interest of their superior missionary wisdom. Roland Allen became a rock of offense in the missionary world because he took Acts seriously. But the Acts of the Apostles continues to testify against our self-willed ways, and it does so the more powerfully as the Juggernaut of history crushes, now here, now there, the results of missionary effort that was not disposed to follow the pattern laid down by the early Church.

What does Acts say about the quality-quantity contrast? Strangely enough, it does not say very much about the quality concept, but it just bubbles over with the idea of *quantity*. As I had occasion to say in another connection:

> The sweep and driving power of the universal proclamation that Acts sets forth is *massive*. The preaching began when the Spirit under portentous signs descended to indwell the Church. At the first proclamation by Peter three thousand men and women believed. The movement that began in Jerusalem, the capital of the people of God, spread throughout the country-side, into Samaria and northward into Syria and Asia Minor. It spilled over into Europe, traversed Greece and reached Rome, the capital of the nations of the world . . . Paralleling the extent of the spread in the geographic area is the massive human area that was gained for the Church. Acts is preeminently a book describing *group approach* in missions. It speaks of missionary approach and of conversions to the faith in terms of three thousand, five thousand, multitudes, many, cities, great numbers, households. That is how the faith spread . . . if the scriptures were written for our learning we should pay large attention to this heavy emphasis in Acts. For as the "speaking with other tongues" symbolized the fact of witness that Pentecost brought into being, *so the first large response to the witness on the day of Pentecost established the pattern for the manner in which future ingatherings recorded in Acts were to take place.*

At Peter's preaching on the day of Pentecost "about *three thousand* souls" were converted, 2:41, and in a short time this number grew so rapidly that there were *five thousand* men alone, 4:4. Through the witness of the apostles "believers were the more added to the Lord, *multitudes*, both of men and women," 5:14. The word of God continued to increase, "and the number of the disciples *multiplied* in Jerusalem *exceedingly*, and a *great company* of the priests were obedient to the faith," 6:7. When persecution scattered the Church, Philip went to Samaria to preach "and the *multitudes* gave heed with one accord unto the things that were spoken by Philip," 8:6, so much so, that the report came to the apostles at Jerusalem "that *Samaria* had received the word of God," 8:14. On their way back from their inspection of the work in Samaria, Peter and John preached the gospel not *in* but *to* many villages of the Samaritans, 8:25. Similarly, Philip, after being caught away from his meeting with the Ethiopian eunuch *evangelized all the cities* till he came to Ceasarea, 8:40. In the course of his evangelistic itineration Peter "went throughout *all parts*," 9:32, and when he came to Lydda "*all that dwelt in Lydda and Sharon* saw him, and they turned to the Lord," 9:35. The preaching of the proselytes from Cyprus and Cyrene in Antioch brought it about that "a *great number* of them that believed turned unto the Lord," 11:24. In Antioch of Pisidia "*almost the whole city*" gathered to hear Paul's testimony, 13:44, and as a result of this witness "the word of the Lord was spread abroad *throughout all the region*," 13:49. At Derbe Paul preached the gospel "to that city" and made *many* disciples, 14:21. In Thessalonica a few Jews were persuaded, but "of the devout Greeks" *a great multitude* and "of the chief women *not a few*," 17:4.

* * *

NOW it is hardly open to question that these *large quantities* of converts were *not* of the highest *quality*. At the very beginning there was an Ananias and a Sapphira. The Grecian widows were not adequately taken care of and this led to murmurrings and dissatisfaction in the Church. Corinth was a plague spot of loveless and immoral relationships. The Jews put law above grace. There were unhappy tensions between Paul and Barnabas, between Paul and Peter. The seven churches mentioned in the first part of Revelation show varying degrees of loyalty to Christ. *Now*here do we read, however, that it were better for the "poor quality" converts to get out of the Church or that they should not be taken into the Church. Paul even writes to those "poor quality" Christians at Corinth: "Know ye not that ye are the temple of the Holy Spirit?"

Just what is an "acceptable" convert anyway? I venture to say there is no such animal. When *we* set up standards whereby the "good" convert is distinguished from the "run-of-the-mill" convert with a view to determining who may and who may not, or who may and who had better not, become members of the Christian Reformed Church, then we come perilously close to the sin of phariseeism. Who are we, to whose account so much sin stands charged, to distinguish between desirable and undesirable members of the Church? Once we start making such distinctions, where do we end? Would we accept the woman taken in adultery who was brought to Jesus? Would we accept Zaccheus? Would the woman taken in adultery be regarded as gracing the list of "quality" members? Would there be room for the criminal on the cross? Would the esteemed apostle who did what he did not want to do, and did not do what he

anted to do, who called himself the ief of sinners, be regarded as a derable member? And I wonder hether we could really use Jesus as n evangelist, this man who preferred associate with sinners and publicans, is man who called not the righteous ut *sinners* to repentance? One thing certain, the "quality" members of e Church of his day did not have ry much use for him.

I wonder, too, how we must underand the parable concerning the man ho made a great supper and invited any. He clearly invited "quality" ests, men who could buy fields and ve yoke of oxen at a time. But these clined to come to the feast. But the or and the blind and the maimed and e lame came. And when they came d there was yet room the host ordered s servant into the highways and the dges to constrain others to come in, at *his house might be full.*

This is the question. This is the big estion. This is the real question. *Do e want a full house?* Do we want a use full of miserable wretches, blind, aimed, lame and poor, who possess *ly one qualification,* namely that they e *eager to attend the feast?* That is e kind of full house the Lord was oking for. That is the kind of full use the early Church was looking r. And got. That is the kind of full use that Pentecost brought into beg. That is the kind of full house we feet in Jerusalem, in Corinth and in alatia. That is the New Testament urch.

* * *

WE MUST seriously ask ourlves whether we stand in a direct line descent from the New Testament hurch that was founded at Pentecost. do not imagine that anyone in the hristian Reformed Church would *theetically deny that we do.* But it is e thing not to deny something theetically, quite another to affirm it sitively and practically. Pentecost eans that the gospel comes to "every ation under heaven." Pentecost means at God in Christ is for the world. aul became all things to all men that e might by all means save some. The hurch which we find in the New Testaent is made up of all kinds of people, e strong and the weak in faith, the ereans who were more noble than the hessalonians because they studied the riptures daily, and the Corinthians ho were all mixed up about so basic a doctrine as the resurrection from the dead. The New Testament knows no blue-blood Church. And if there is no such thing as a blue-blood Church it is difficult to see that we have a right to insist on blue-blood converts.

Are we *the Church?* Are we the *one holy catholic Church?* Nothing, absolutely *nothing* that we as a distinctively Reformed Church believe or practice may *ever* under *any* circumstances damage or do despite to this confession: *I believe a holy catholic Church.* The purpose of our distinctively Reformed position is to enable us to be *that Church, that one universal* Church, more adequately, more faithfuly. Therefore woe to us, woe to our fruitfulness in the kingdom, woe to our conception of salvation by *grace alone,* when we say of this or that convert: Yes, he's a Christian, he is truly a child of God, he has been accepted by Christ, but he does not quite measure up to *our* standards. He's a member of Christ's universal body, but he can't be a member of the Christian Reformed body.

When we talk in this way we forget an important New Testament emphasis. We forget that Christ commanded his Church *first* to *disciple* the Gentiles, that is, make them members of his body, and *then* to *teach* them "all things whatsoever I commanded you," that is, perfect them in knowledge and in grace. For this reason the New Testament always distinguishes sharply between the simple confession of Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord, by which a man is qualified for baptism and membership in the Church, on the one hand, and the full implications of this confession and the higher requirements for office-bearers, on the other hand. We go far beyond the New Testament condition for membership in the Church of Christ when in addition to faith in Christ we make the *already* sanctified life and the *already* instructed mind a condition for membership. The Spirit of Pentecost whose powerful working is recorded in the New Testament *first* discipled men by making them members of the body of Christ, and *thereupon* perfected them by revealing the fuller implications of discipleship.

The Missouri Synod Lutheran Church is a very conservative body. It believes in a doctrinal and disciplined Christianity. Yet it has grown in membership from 1,200,000 in 1930 to 2,100,000 in 1955. It is building churches at the rate of 135 a year. Why cannot the Christian Reformed Church enjoy a similar expansion? I firmly believe that a major obstacle that stands in the way of such an expansion is the expressly or implicitly held idea that the Christian Reformed Church should be a blue-blood church.

What shall we have to say to the Lord in the day when he asks us to give an account of the talent entrusted to us? Shall we say, "Lord, we knew that you insisted on strict orthodoxy. We stayed orthodox. We protected our orthodoxy by adding many rules and regulations. We saw to it that no one entered our congregational membership who was not pretty Christian Reformed to begin with. Our gains have been little but we kept the standards high. We began as a group of Holland-Americans and we ended up that way. Barring exceptions, we did not feel that full-blooded Americans could be blue-blooded Church members. Here is thy pound." Shall we say this?

Assumptions

Life is not long enough for a religion of inferences; we shall never have done beginning, if we determine to begin with proof. We shall be ever laying our foundations; we shall turn theology into evidences, and divines into textuaries. We shall never get at out first principles. Resolve to believe nothing, and you must prove your proofs and analyze your elements, sinking farther and farther, and finding "in the lowest depths a lower deep," till you come to the broad broom of skepticism. . . . Life is for Action. If we insist on proofs for everything, we shall never come to action: to act you must assume, and that assumption is faith. — John Henry Newman

American Religious Characteristics

by JOHN H. KROMMINGA

THE Christian Reformed Church is a church with an old heritage in a new environment. If she is to perform her labors effectively, she must strive not only to deepen her understanding of her heritage, but to sharpen her perception of the environment. It is to the latter goal that this and a succeeding article are directed.

What is the nature of the new-world environment in which we labor? The task of arriving at a significant answer to this question is easier than it would have been a few decades ago. William Warren Sweet, in *The Story of Religion in America*, notes that American church history has in the past been written largely by denominational historians. The difficulty of getting a comprehensive picture on this basis is obvious.

Dr. Sweet has attempted to supply this comprehensive picture. We may mention a few others who have helped him in this task. Frederick Jackson Turner, with his thesis that the frontier was the dominant influence in American history in general, has provided the impetus for a whole school of historians. Peter G. Mode in particular applied Turner's thesis to American *church* history. Others have contributed their bit; Sweet himself with respect to religion in the colonies; Perry Miller and Samuel Eliot Morison with respect to the New England Puritans; George Hammar with respect to theological development in America. Many more specialized studies have made their appearance or are now in the making.

At the moment, a distinct service has been rendered by Sidney Mead, of the University of Chicago. He has written a brilliant article, *Denominationalism, the Shape of Protestantism in America*, published in the December, 1954, issue of *Church History*. We shall refer to this article, seek to place ourselves in its pattern, and note the measure of our difference from or conformity to the American environment. The last-named effort will be suggestive rather than exhaustive. Each of the readers is free, on the basis of what he knows or thinks the Christian Reformed Church to be, to make his own application of the comparison between that church and its environment.

I. The Formative Period

BY common admission, American religion has not been *theologically* fruitful. America's theology has been largely derived, as has that of Canada also. The old adage that theology is made in Germany, corrected in Scotland, and corrupted in America has some truth in it. Insofar as they have concerned themselves with theology at all, Americans have modified systems borrowed from elsewhere. But in its *institutional* forms, American religion has seen a development which is quite unlike that found anywhere else in the world.

The classic European church forms were dominant in American history up to a certain point. By a later time, the uniqueness had emerged. The period between these two points may therefore be taken as the formative period. The *terminus a quo* for this formative period is about 1787, and the *terminus ad quem* 1850. The formative period thus begins just after the Revolutionary War and ends just before the Civil War.

What happened in this period to stamp it as formative? The American situation forced the churches to change from the classic European types into voluntaryistic organizations. After the Reformation the more conservative Protestant churches in Europe were both confessional and territorial in their basis. But various dissenting churches arose, claiming freedom of expression. The processes which they followed and the measure of success which they attained need not detain us here. The point is that representatives of *all* of these groups were transplanted to America. As a result of their presence, their diversity, and their influence, religious freedom was written into the American Constitution. And the working out of that freedom set its indelible stamp on almost all of the denominations which passed through the next sixty years of American history; which is to say that religious freedom and the American frontier set their stamp on well-nigh the whole American Church.

What happened in this period can be represented most graphically by showing the shift in denominations which dominated the American scene. In 1787 the largest denominations were the following:

1. Congregationalists
2. Anglicans
3. Baptists
4. Presbyterians
5. Lutherans
6. German Reformed
7. Dutch Reformed

(12. Methodists)

Every one of the top seven, with one exception, was an established church or represented close connections with some established group in the old world. The one exception is the Baptists, who had experienced a rapid growth since 1750, reflecting an early influence of some of the very conditions which we shall note.

By 1850, the major denominations were the following:

1. Roman Catholics
2. Methodists
3. Baptists
4. Presbyterians
5. Congregationalists
6. Lutherans
7. Disciples
8. Protestant Episcopal
9. Mormons

Omitting the Roman Catholics, who enter only incidentally into this study, it is to be noted that the Congregational Church fell from first to fifth; it was later to decline to ninth. The Anglicans fell from second to eighth. On the other hand, the Methodists rose from twelfth to second; the Disciples came from non-existence to seventh and a group on the very fringes of Christianity, the Mormons, advanced to ninth in the twenty years since their founding.

With some minor changes, this has continued to be the situation. Beyond the changes noted, the older denominations were forced to conform to a large extent to a new pattern in order to maintain their position as well as they did. This, then, is the reason for calling this period formative. We will proceed to consider what influences brought about this change. By that process we will come to conclusions as to what is distinctive about American religious organization.

As we proceed to that study, there are three very significant considerations to bear in mind with respect to the Christian Reformed Church. They go far to explain the considerable differences between that church and its environment. In the first place, the Christian Reformed Church was introduced to America in 1857, after the so-called formative period was over. In the second place, her membership grew almost entirely by means of immigration of people from a different religious situation. In the third place, she was on her guard from the very beginning against American tendencies. These differences were accentuated by the separation from the Reformed Church in America in 1857. These considerations set the stage for our realization that the Christian Reformed Church is not fully Americanized. They provide, further, the occasion for the consideration of two related questions: whether complete absorption into the American pattern is desirable, and whether such absorption is inevitable. With those factors in mind, we shall briefly delineate six processes which entered into the making of the American Church.

II. Lack of a Sense of Historic Continuity: Sectarianism

AGAINST the broad background of the frontier and religious freedom, certain factors helped shape the American Church. The first of these was a direct appeal to the Word for authentication of the position of each group, large or small. This gave rise to a loss of the sense of historic continuity with the ancient Christian Church.

The appeal directly to Scripture was a "dissenter" practice carried over from Europe. It involved an attempt to be just like the Church of the first few centuries, and was carried out as if the intervening centuries had never existed. The Reformation itself had already brought about in Europe a more direct attention to the Word, freeing it from the domination of the Church. But the "right-wing" Protestant Churches held to the Word plus the Church and the Ministry, in such a way as to preserve continuity with historic Christianity. Over against the security in which these right-wing Churches entrenched themselves, the groups who dissented appealed directly to the Word, placed in the hands of the Spirit-filled believer.

In America the churches of the right wing were originally prominent. But they had to share the scene with people from other traditions and backgrounds, and they had no coercive power to give their view the upper hand. They were forced ultimately to compete with left-wing churches. But, even more significant, the common ground for competition was the basis of the dissenter churches: the Word of God, appealed to directly, over all authority and tradition. Thus a real transformation came about, not only in the list of prominent denominations, but within those very denominations which had first dominated the scene.

The American atmosphere fostered the break with historic continuity. The common sense of an opportunity to begin all over again in a new world contributed to this historylessness. The Puritans in particular gave eloquent expression to the idea that God was giving His Church a new chance to begin over again and avoid the mistakes into which men had fallen in the past. But the idea, though not always well formulated, was held in other groups as well, and even by the common members of those groups. The history between the first centuries and the new opportunity was seen as one of aberrations and corruptions, which could better be ignored.

Such freedom gave to each church, and even to each individual, the chance to read his own convictions in the Bible. This in fact became a reading of one's own convictions *into* the Bible. But what was interpreted as the freedom from bondage to tradition was in another view the loss of the anchor of the creeds. As Mead remarks, "Their freedom in this respect was largely the appearance or feeling of freedom possible only to those ignorant of their rich history." Such freedom — a freedom without historical perspective — actually bound them to the tendencies of the moment. In a sense this lays the groundwork for all that follows: now whatever seemed reasonable at the moment could be built into the system of doctrine, and be given the sanctity of having been drawn directly from Scripture.

* * *

THE Christian Reformed Church, coming into this ripened situation, entered with a sense of a heritage from the past. This sense was made the more significant by reason of the very aloneness of the tiny immigrant group in this huge land. It has been fed by immigration, and is still being so fed today. Exchange of students, professors, and periodicals with the Netherlands still feeds it. There is markedly less of a sense of religious tradition here than in the Netherlands; but there is noticeably more among Christian Reformed people than among the average American group. We have spoken highly of our tradition; but we have not always understood its value as we should. Many among us have felt hampered by that tradition rather than freed by it, and some fine people have been lost to us for that reason.

As an indication of the impact of historylessness upon us, let us note an item from our present situation. In the contemporary scene, in which we feel that the liberal churches are not appealing to the Word any more, we are strongly attracted to Fundamentalism, with its appeal to Scripture in the American tradition. But we must insist that we are *not* Fundamentalists in the full sense of the term. This historylessness we do not share. We have a treasure which is recognized as such by scholars outside our own circles. What folly, if at the very time when historic continuity is again being recognized as a treasure, we should repudiate it! We must see ourselves and show ourselves to others as representatives of historic Christianity.

Again, we must beware of falling into a "historylessness" of our own peculiar sort. We shall make a serious error if we proceed upon the unconscious assumption that the centuries between the Reformation and the present did not exist, and that the development in America had never occurred. If we accuse Fundamentalists of making a long jump back over many important centuries to the New Testament times, we are better only in degree if we make a smaller jump back to the sixteenth century. The length of the leap is not so important as the fact that a leap is being made. We must be keenly and increasingly aware, intelligently aware, of the fact that we live in a society which *has* passed through Rationalism, Romanticism, the frontier, and the revival. Our place is here and our time is now, and any attitude which ignores those facts is a hindrance rather than a help.

American Religious Characteristics — Continued

III. The Voluntary Principle

THE essence of the transformation in the American Church was that churches of the European type became voluntaryistic. The voluntary principle inevitably comes to the fore in a society in which the churches are equal before, but independent of, the civil power and each other. Having given up any means of coercion to maintain themselves, the churches are thrown squarely upon persuasion to make their way.

Revivalism highlighted and furthered the transition from the European to the American type of churches. Revivalism as a formative force will be treated in a succeeding article; but we note it here in passing because it became the chief agency of the voluntary principle. Revivals brought the right and left wings in the various churches into clashes with each other. In every case — even where considerable resistance was met — the revival emphasis eventually triumphed. It did this because it showed the possibilities of persuasion and aroused confidence in this method.

The voluntary principle creates an atmosphere in which church membership is determined by practical considerations. A recent Congregational history, quoted by Mead, declares that a Congregational church is a group of Christians associated together for a definite purpose, not because of peculiarities of belief; and the members of local churches are not asked to relinquish their previous denominational teachings, but are asked to join in a simple covenant pledging cooperation and fellowship. The voluntary association is governed by the goal toward which it strives. How deeply American religion is permeated with this attitude to all matters of faith and practice should be apparent to all who observed the conflict between American and European emphases at Evanston.

This situation has contributed to the rise of churches which have no confessions and boast of that fact. In many other cases it has led churches with confessions to shelve them as if they counted for nothing practical and were hindrances rather than helps. Even where churches have held to their confessions, they have tended to become promotional and propagandistic with respect to them.

This situation has the further effect of shutting off the flow of theological discussion. Such discussions are notable by their absence, either between the various denominations or within them. They are thought to be potentially divisive, and therefore considered to constitute a danger to the successful prosecution of the task of the Church. Beyond this, they are considered basically irrelevant, and more often than not there is a lack of the consciousness of theological distinctiveness among the members of a denomination. In the light of all this, it is easy to understand the suspicion and hostility with which any attempt to revive theological discussion is greeted.

The appeal to persuasion has an effect on the ministry also. It is the denominational politician rather than the theologian who becomes the important figure. If a man happens to be a theologian as well as a politician, that is an accident; but whatever else he may be, he must know the ropes to rise to importance. His importance is measured rather by his ability to get things done than by the profundity of his thought. "It isn't always the best students who make the best ministers."

An equally important, though less recognized, implication is that only what the various denominations hold in common is really relevant for the needs of society and the state. Those views which any group holds peculiarly are not relevant. The so-called "essentials of religion" receive the emphasis. This gives rise to a kind of religion which, whatever name it may be given, is and remains a least-common-denominator religion. Thus not only theological discussion and the theologian himself, but also theological distinctness and distinctiveness are relegated to the trash-heap. Not any particular doctrinal tenet, but doctrine itself suffers. It becomes impossible even at a meeting of seminary professors (such as one held in Chicago in connection with the World Council of Churches last summer) to get a hearing for the question *what* the seminaries are to teach and the churches to preach. Only the *how* seems to matter.

* * *

AGAIN with respect to voluntaryism, as with respect to the sense of historic continuity, the Christian Reformed Church finds herself somewhere between Europe and America. She resembles the Missouri Synod Lutherans in not having surrendered wholly to the voluntary principle, but in having become somewhat "promotional and propagandistic" with respect to her creeds. She has formal doctrinal standards of admission to the church but the activistic principle carries increasing weight in her ways in the world. The Christian Reformed minister often has a difficult task defending the distinctiveness of his church to his own members, who speak of the excellent program of some other church or of the superiority or their graded Sunday School lessons, or some such thing.

The status of theological discussion offers a good measuring stick. It seems that we are distinctly less inclined to theological discussion than the European churches, and distinctly more so than most American churches. I should guess that we are still closer to Europe than America in this respect, although that might be challenged with good reason. If we consider doctrinal preaching, our conclusions are about the same. We have infinitely more of this than the average American church. But we are busy disguising it, covering it up, submerging it, and perhaps even losing it.

The question which faces us at our half-way point is which way we want to go; back to Europe or forward to America? Without question we would like to do both. But nobody has yet succeeded in doing so, and the danger is that he who tries will finally do neither. On the one hand, we wish to retain that good element of our historic European heritage, theological discussion. But at least on the surface, and perhaps even basically, that militates against our finding a common meeting ground to discuss matters of faith with our American neighbors.

Again, we must maintain, in the face of the American tendency, that what is distinctive in our theology is important, is relevant, is essential. But is our distinctive tenet reconcilable with voluntaryism? What, incidentally, is our distinctive tenet? Is it election? Is it the sovereignty of God? Is it something so grand and broad as "historic Christianity"? But, whatever it is, if it is not compatible with voluntaryism how shall we begin to compete if we will not even adopt common ground for competition? In fact, the question may not even be whether our distinctive tenet can be harmonized with voluntaryism. Insistence on *any* tenet clashes

with the voluntary principle. The question then becomes this; if we insist that the Church has a doctrinal base, how shall we thrive — or even survive — where all men agree that what delineates the Church is the program which the Church seeks to carry out?

* * *

We have noted the first two among six influences which have formed the American Church. In a later article we shall discuss the mission enterprise, revivalism, the flight from reason, and competition between denominations.

But we have seen enough already to note that the differences between our church and our country's churches are far more basic than mere differences in language and customs. Fortunately we are free to maintain our position in this land. But let not that freedom deceive us. On the one hand, the maintenance of our own position will not come automatically. That which will come automatically is a gradual absorption into the American atmosphere until all that is distinctive is lost. This we do not want, nor do we believe that we would serve either the cause of God or our country well in that way. But on the other hand, the freedom to maintain our own position may also cut us off from living contact with our neighbors, and this we do not want either. After a further examination of these difficulties, we must proceed to consider what can be done about them.

The Court's Role in Social Problems II

by WALLACE WAALKES, JR.

In the June issue of the *Journal* I considered how the courts confront certain problems that men face when compelled to live together in a modern urban community. In concluding the discussion I begin by calling attention to the problem of

The Mentally Ill

What else can one say about the problem of the mentally ill except that it is a very large and difficult one. In its broadest scope it includes the mentally disturbed, the mentally deficient, the epileptics and the seniles. Their numbers increase almost daily. In its commitment function the court sees the problem not just on the basis of whether the legal requirements for enforced hospitalization have been met but has a good view of the problems of overcrowding, lack of treatment facilities, and lack of research and training facilities, which are all a part of this staggering public health problem. It is the No. 1 health problem in the U. S. Dr. James Salk of polio vaccine fame has said that it must be the next area of intensive research. More persons are affected by mental illness than by polio, TB, and cancer all put together. 32,000 patients are in mental hospitals in our State alone; more than 720,000 in the U. S. The Probate Court in Kent County commits on the average of one person each working day in one of these categories. Our tax dollars by the millions are being spent — often unwisely, for more bed space — it is a matter of millions for custody and only a miserably few dollars for research and training. The tide is beginning to turn and Legislatures begin to see the need — in Ohio, the Legislature has now adopted a slogan, in considering this problem, of "Brains Before Bricks." We are crowded beyond all capacity to cope with the persons afflicted.

The most extreme difficulty is in the area of the Aged Persons who are mentally disturbed — they can be found in every mental institution by the thousands. Too often they are sent there because there is no other place for them. Family care of the aged has broken down just in the proportion that families themselves with urban living have broken down. No one wants to care for our senior citizens. Pressure upon the court from families and social agencies to send these people to the only available institutions which are needed as treatment centers for treatable and acute mental cases, is terrific.

Mental illness is presently characterized by long waiting lists — every State institution has persons awaiting admission. The hospitals and training schools for epileptics and mentally handicapped are now operating on a 6 months to 18 months estimate of time between commitment order and actual admission.

Early detection and prevention with treatment instituted in the early stages of mental illness is certainly one direction in which we should turn in our search for a solution to this problem. What can the clergy do here? Just as Judges and lawyers are not formally trained in social work, the clergy do not receive sufficient training in psychology and the fundamentals of psychiatry to function adequately in their roles as counsellors to be able to spot the paranoids and the psychotics in the early stages. It is difficult to adapt language of theology in this field — we cannot all be psychiatrists and psychologists. Yet there is a role for a counsellor in this area to understand the psychotherapy which the psychiatrist might recommend and help and guide a family in giving such help to the one afflicted. The family of a mentally ill person also needs help in such a time of emotional trouble.

At the other extreme from the seniles, is the almost total lack of facilities for children who are mentally disturbed and need in-patient care and treatment. A 70-bed facility at Northville State Hospital to be called "Hawthorne Center" is now in the planning stage, but this will only take care of a fraction of the children in Michigan now in need of mental hospital care and unable to receive it. Recently we committed an 11-year old boy with an IQ of 150 to the Kalamazoo State Hospital for mentally ill adults and there he is today. Knowing that these conditions exist and seeing daily the needs of the community on this score — it just is not possible simply to go quietly ahead determining if legal requirements for enforced hospitalization are met. One feels like shouting of the need from the housetops.

Children's Problems

This brings us to the problem of children, the juveniles who are dependent, neglected or delinquent and

Court's Role in Social Problems — Continued

in some manner out of adjustment with society. Everyone is an expert in this field and it is difficult to out-expert all the experts. Recently in our county the situation has been brought forcibly to public attention by a mass meeting of citizens. This is a wonderful display of community awareness and has served to remind the court again that children's problems are everyone's business. So often a judge must stand by helplessly while children in difficulty head for disaster. He knows the right thing to do to head them off but is unable to accomplish it for lack of resources and adequate finances. Many times he must take the criticism for this impotence because budget-makers are parsimonious toward the juvenile department. The biggest headache a Juvenile Judge has is not the parents or the children but the fiscal officials who do not see the importance of the Juvenile Court in proper perspective.

Here is a matter of the gravest concern to the court, the proper disposition of children's cases. In most other cases lawyers can appeal from error made and a higher court will right the wrong done. Inadequate provision for children in trouble, or mishandling and error, might well leave its mark upon a child for life, and all the subsequent appeals to higher courts (almost unknown in juvenile cases anyway) will not restore a child, so marked, to wholeness.

The Court has many problems here which are complex enough just from the standpoint of social good, but particularly for a Judge who tries to practice a Calvinistic world and life approach the way is often unchartered. It requires more study, reflection and thinking than a busy judge with a whopping big caseload can give it.

LET'S take an example: Here is a 24-year old, mentally deficient woman whose 2 illegitimate, mentally deficient children have come within the court's orbit in the past. Social agencies have now resorted to the law and are seeking a court order for the enforced sterilization of this woman so that she will be unable to bear any more mentally deficient children. The Court has some discretion to require extremely strong proofs under the statute which says: "Whether such mentally defective person would be likely, if allowed to mingle with society, to procreate children having an inherited tendency to feeblemindedness, insanity, idiocy, imbecility, epilepsy or sexual degeneracy, and who would be likely to become a social menace." It is a known fact that the proof of "tendency to procreate her kind" is difficult and if strictly interpreted and applied renders this almost impossible of accomplishment. What physician or expert will say that even though 2 of her children are mentally deficient that the third one is apt to be also. Shall the Court think in terms of "likely" and be strict and difficult about this, or listen to some of the enlightened sociologists and think in terms of "tendency," as being shown by the birth of two mental defectives, thus showing that the grounds in the statute are present. Fortunately, up to this time, I have not had to face up to this problem. It is a very involved one. What is the Court's role here?

Here is another example: The law in Michigan provides that a minor child over the age of 14 years can nominate his own guardian — if the Father and Mother are not living. This presents no problem, but, where the parents are living, there must be proof that they are "incompetent or unsuitable" parents. Recently a 16 year old girl nominated her aunt as her guardian although her parents were living. This girl had difficulty at home, her parents were quite strict, she chafed under parental restraint. Her aunt was more understanding. These parents were not incompetent — the issue as developed was whether they were unsuitable. You will agree that the word "unsuitable" is one that might receive a wide variety of interpretation. What standard of suitability will a court use here. Should a judge pass upon the suitability of something which he believes was ordained by God, who command that we honor our Father and our Mother.

Let's swing over to the other extreme: Recently the authorities found two small boys aged 6 and 8 living on one of our city dumps in a shack. They were undernourished, dirty, the products of a broken home. Are we now on safer ground to terminate parental rights on the theory that these parents had forfeited their rights to that Honor which the Bible ordains. Should we consider the alternative of placing them in an institutional setting, a Juvenile Home which is operated somewhat like a jail, but is far better than letting them eke out an existence on the City dump? But is it the best the community could do for them. What about foster homes?

Conclusions

WELL, you are probably thinking by now that there certainly are problems for a professing Calvinist who must sit in judgment upon these cases every day, especially when they come so thick and fast that it is not always possible to think through the implications of each situation. But, you say, Judge, that's your problem. What message is there in all of this for us Christians?

Let me try to articulate my thoughts accurately here. We speak of keeping aloof from the world, of living in it and not becoming identified with it too closely. If we proceed along this track without counterbalancing this against other considerations we tend to withdraw from the world; separation and isolation from the world seem desirable. We become ostriches with our heads in the sand. If we stress that we must live in this world, pay taxes to support our government, help elect our officials, let our light shine, practice a Calvinistic world and life view no matter what profession, business or calling we may find ourselves in, try to love our neighbors as ourselves, then we cannot help but take these social problems of 1955 in our urban civilization seriously.

Not so long ago some of us took some interest in Bingo — a game of chance, and a lottery — when a movement to change the Michigan Constitution to legalize this game was threatened. This was a worthwhile fight and deserved our support. Yet I am certain that it was not a threat nor a problem to our Christian Reformed community. Very few if any of our people ever play bingo and very few ever would — whether the State law made it legal or not. Why did we step into that one when we are so backward about tangling in other matters that affect the community as a whole. Was it because this Bingo fight had more of the glamour of a Holy War against evil, and we could gird on our armour and do battle against the forces of unrighteousness? Have we shied away from the empty social-do-gooder type of modernism so far that we have gone

to the other extreme and are failing in true Christian love of our neighbors?

If easy divorces are a menace to the community, family and homes of our fellow men can't we engender enthusiasm about electing legislators who will do everything possible to bring about laws which may improve this situation? Are we on fire to learn the attitudes of our judges about divorce when they run for election? Do we study this problem not just from the standpoint of what our Reformed people must adhere to but what the great community-wide effects are? Here's a quotation: "And ye, oh peoples, to whom God gave the liberty to choose your own magistrates, see to it that ye do not forfeit this favor, by electing to the positions of highest honor, rascals and enemies of God." These are Calvin's words.

The message about alcoholics has already been drawn and if you think that those of our flock are immune from this let me only comment that this is not so. While they are anonymous, I recognize the faces of the alcoholics I see and some of them are our own people. But here is the crux of it all: we are thinking again only of our own. We take care of our own. We have our great mental institutions at Cutlerville, in New Jersey, and at Bethesda to take care of our own mentally ill; our Holland Home and other institutions to take care of our senile people; our Bethany Children's Home to help care for homeless children and place them in foster and adoptive homes. We put forth a tremendous effort to care for our own. This is a fine example of our witness. We should publicize this more. It is a shining example to the world of Christian love and mercy better than many sermons.

BUT MUST WE STOP THERE?

We also pay thousands of dollars in taxes to care for mentally ill and seniles who are not our own, yet we have not sought to be represented upon the boards and agencies in our communities who are trying to improve the lot of these unfortunate people and thinking of the wisest way to help them with the money we spend for this purpose. We have a neighborhood mission chapel effort, a radio effort, and we make a feeble effort at neighborhood evangelization, but the number of adult baptisms is almost infinitesimal. What impact are we making? Are we dying on the vine? Have we infiltrated the areas where human misery and disturbance have made our neighbors very receptive and by example of Christian love and interest in the afflicted and maladjusted explored the possibilities offered?

* * *

ONE of the finest examples of civic cooperation I have seen was a few years ago when the drive was on in Grand Rapids for support of a bond issue to build new public schools. A group of workers who were in the campaign to help convince the people of the community that this was a great need had met in the basement of one of our public schools. One lady rose to state a difficulty which she feared she might experience in the neighborhood she had to canvass. She said there were many Hollanders in this particular section and since they sent their children to the private Christian schools she felt they would afford her a somewhat cool reception. Thereupon the chairman of the meeting asked all the workers present at the meeting who were private Christian school parents to rise. There were about 30 people present. Twelve stood — among them the principal of the Christian elementary and junior high school in the area. So here were people who paid taxes for public schools, ready to be taxed more for public schools and ready to go out and work to convince their fellow citizens to vote these additional taxes when their own children would never attend these new schools. Here was an example of love of neighbor which epitomizes what I am trying to convey to you. Our neighbors, our country, are fighting all of the problems we have discussed. What do we do to help? I can name on the fingers of one hand all of the Christian Reformed or Reformed members of a score or more of community associations who labor year in and year out to do something in these areas: The Kent County Mental Health Society which is leading the movement for an adult mental clinic in our own county; the Family Service Association which does more to seek family adjustments and head off divorces than any other single agency in the community; The Child Guidance Clinic Board which works to improve the service to the mentally disturbed and emotionally upset children in our community. Our people should be busy setting an example — making their light shine in all of these and in many more.

There are bright notes. At a recent Mass Meeting to seek improvement in our County Juvenile Home, and for children's services in this county in general, we were wonderfully represented by our Christian School PTA's and the Evangelical Ministers Association. We have therefore several members on the Citizens Committee which was formed to carry on this effort. This is the shining of our light in the world. This is example. This is demonstrative evidence of Christian love of neighbor. My school drive example and this one are steps in the right direction.

* * *

WELL, a Lawyer will never let a jury go out and deliberate without making what he calls his SUMMATION — and Here It Is: I have tried to say that a Court stands in many instances at the point where the sphere of government is interrelated with the social sphere. At this juncture the Court has a close look at many social problems — usually in their most advanced and extreme form. This vantage point allows the Court a view of the bitter-end results of such social evils as divorce, alcoholism, mental illness, and broken homes.

My own status as a professing Calvinist in a judgeship is not without many grave problems. The greatest of these is a feeling of loneliness because my fellow Calvinists are not very well represented in the groups who try to fight these evils on a community-wide basis. My thesis is simply that they should be. We correctly put first things first and our whole thinking is therefore God-centered. We should put second things second, too. The impact on the community of example in caring for our own is amply practiced by us but perhaps not as fully published abroad and exploited as it might be. This example could be coupled with an example of Christian love for our fellowmen by social action which is broad enough to attempt solutions for all in the community who are beset with these problems. People in the community who are involved in social problems in the acute stage seen by the courts are greatly disturbed and often groping for real and lasting comfort and peace of mind. By our example in helping them we may spark a softening-up process which will have indirect but real help to our neighborhood evangelization efforts.

Science and Pure Reason

by HENRY STOB

THE Dichotomist, of whom I spoke last time, thinks that Christian Faith does not, or should not, affect in an integral way the elaboration of the sciences called natural or formal. He does not think it proper, or strictly possible, to construct a "Christian Physics." Physics, he thinks, is intrinsically a "neutral" science, which requires construction in isolation from all faith-determinants; it is an "objective" science which, like Logic or Mathematics, can only be sullied and compromised by the intrusion of the religious, the personal, the subjective.

The Dichotomist acknowledges that what is true of Physics and Mathematics is *not* true of Philosophy or Ethics or Esthetics or Sociology or any one of the other spiritual or human sciences. These, in his view, are essentially "subjective"; at the very least they have an ineradicable subjective factor in them. They therefore can and do manifest the effects of faith and commitment, whether Christian or non-Christian. Unlike Physics these sciences by their very nature articulate basic religious beliefs.

The Dichotomist, it will be remembered, cuts the single organism of science into two parts. The one part he carefully insulates against the influence of faith; the other he deliberately and approvingly exposes to this influence. He believes that the intrusion of faith compromises the scientific standing of Physics; he does *not* believe that an Ethics based on faith is similarly compromised. He will allow the possibility, even the desirability, of a "Christian Ethics"; he will *not* allow the possibility or propriety of a "Christian Physics."

* * *

THE Dichotomist finds himself opposed by those who insist that a division of the sciences, such as he makes, is without warrant in theory and in practice. Science, these opponents hold, is One, and the various disciplines which make up the single body of Science are either *open* to faith in their entirety, or *closed* to faith in their entirety. What is true of one department of science is true of all. It is not so that some scientific disciplines are properly amenable to religious determination while others are not. Either all of them are thus amenable or none of them is. If a "Christian Ethics" is possible, so is a "Christian Physics"; there is no line or border at which faith can be made to halt. On the other hand, if a "Christian Physics" is not possible, neither is a "Christian Ethics"; if faith must be excluded from science at one point, then it must be excluded at every other point.

On this the two chief opponents of the Dichotomist are agreed. Both the Fideist, who assigns to Faith a determinative role in every branch of science, and the Rationalist, who assigns to faith a role in none, think that the Dichotomist is inconsistent. Both deplore his compromising attitude. Both want him to universalize his admissions concerning one of the two sets of sciences he discriminates. The Fideist wants him to extend to Physics the insight he has into the nature of Ethics and Philosophy. The Rationalist wants him to extend to Philosophy and the other human sciences the insight he has into the nature of Physics. Neither is satisfied with his partial concessions.

Both the Fideist and the Rationalist demand attention, but since the Rationalist has in modern times been the more vocal of the two, I shall undertake to discuss him first. — What precisely does the Rationalist say, and what is the Rationalism on which he builds?

* * *

RATIONALISM is the view that in science sense-observation and rational thought are the only instruments of knowledge. It will be observed that Rationalism as thus defined is not opposed to Empiricism. It includes this. What it is opposed to is Fideism, its strongest and most resolute enemy, with which it vies for the mind of the Dichotomist.

Rationalism is not a Reformed position. Yet it has never been wholly absent from the Christian Church, and it is found within it today. It is given shelter there because it is not wholly intolerant of religion, and is not inconsistent with a certain kind of respect both for the supernatural and for faith. It is not directly opposed to Religion and Belief; it is merely concerned to assign them to a modest and restricted place, and to provide for Science and Reason an independent place beside them.

Rationalism holds that Science and Religion, Reason and Faith, are two quite different magnitudes, and that there exists no internal relation between them. They coexist indeed in the same world, where they make characteristic contributions to that world's treasury, but they exercise, or ought to exercise, no influence upon each other. Reason may not allow itself to be governed by the insights of faith; science may not bind itself to the pronouncements of religion. Science must proceed independently and autonomously.

Not only the natural sciences must do this, as the Dichotomist contends, but every other science as well. Science is One. There are different departments, to be sure, but basically and structurally all the sciences are alike. They all live by the exclusion of religion from their precincts.

This means concretely that the Rationalist cannot recognize the existence of a "Christian Physics." But it also means that he cannot admit the possibility of a "Christian Philosophy." A faith-philosophy is to him as much a contradiction in terms as a religious chemistry. When the Rationalist therefore notices that the Dichotomist repudiates the notion of a "Christian Physics" he applauds him. But he bids the Dichotomist at the same time to forsake the half-way house he occupies and repudiate too the notion of a "Christian Ethics."

The Rationalist says to the Dichotomist, in effect: Learn to make a clean break between the natural and the supernatural. Acknowledge the supernatural if you choose, but keep it out of science. You may believe in religious truths, but remember that these are never known by reason or observation, and have no place in science. Remember, too, that scientific truths, if they be truly scientific, are known independently of faith, which may never be allowed to predetermine and prejudge the deliverances of reason or experience.

* * *

THE Rationalist, it is plain, wants to keep science pure — free of all pre-theoretical, pre-rational commitments.

He wants to come to the object of his investigation without any prepossessions or presuppositions. He wants to exclude the variables that the subject is constantly tempted to bring to the object. He bids himself and every investigator to break attachment to everything save the object. He counsels the investigator to divorce himself from every judgment not dictated by the investigation itself. The investigator must come clean — without bias, without prejudice, without preconceptions.

This counsel is, of course, not wholly bad. There are individual, local, provincial, racial, and national biases which impede sound inquiry, and which should therefore be resolutely banned. This is so true that even theological preconceptions must, as most Reformed exegetes allow, be set aside when the Bible is investigated. Biblical studies are conducted not in an effort to verify theological conclusions previously arrived at, but simply to hear the pure Word of God. By the same token, in the investigation of any object whatever, subjective prejudices and biases must be set aside in order to permit the object to reveal itself as it really is.

When this is said, however — and it needs saying lest science lose all objectivity and the facts lose their power to constrain — it remains true that the Rationalist's demand for a basically presuppositionless science is an impossible demand. The evidence for this will be supplied when the Fideist presents his case in next month's *Journal*. Here it is enough to observe that the Christian, taught by the Bible and trained in the school of Augustine and Calvin, can hardly yield to the Rationalist's demand. In the Rationalist's view the very idea of a Christian Science collapses into nothingness. This, the Calvinist senses, cannot be right. As I have elsewhere said:

This means that religion is denied all theoretical expression other than that involved in value judgments, and that science is denied the wide and absolute perspectives of religion.

But it means more than that. It means that, strictly speaking, the Christian Student or the Christian Scientist is a myth. The demarcation line that severs science from religion decrees that no individual can be both Christian and Scientist at once and in a single act. In his religious moods he must exercise faith, and accept, on evidence unsatisfactory to the accepted scientific logic, transcendent mysteries which lie beyond the power of reason to attain or comprehend. In his scientific moods he must hold all that in strict abeyance, and investigate the cosmos without benefit of supernatural aid.

In other words, a man must cut himself asunder and posit an antithesis within himself. In the privacy of his room he may distinguish himself from his fellows by belief in the skandalon of the cross; in his scientific labors he must be like his fellows in exercising a supposedly neutral and impersonal reason. He must own a private and a public self. Christ may rule his heart, but he may not rule his head. Christ may be regarded as significant for religion, but he cannot be regarded as having an equal significance for science.

* * *

AGAINST such a view the Christian is bound to protest in the name of life's inviolable Wholeness. He is bound to protest, too, in response to the solemn summons to bring every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ.

Such a protest is in existence. I propose to consider it next time under the name of *Fideism*.

Reserved For Celebration

by JOHN VRIEND*

"Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy . . ."

IN human society many a process and many an event is rounded off by means of a feast. On such an occasion we drink more deeply out of the wellsprings of life simply because then there is a dimension of meaning not available at other times. We step out of the box of our usual inhibited selves in order to share in the trans-individual spirit which has seized the day. Such a day has particular depth for the very reason that it transcends the particular. It is always a day with a joyous secret at the heart of it; and the secret — I may as well say it at the outset — is never a vague ideal but always a completed fact.

We celebrate weddings — for then a courtship has ripened and reached its natural culmination. We have harvest festivals — for somehow we cannot resist confirming a climax. There is joy in being finished and joy refuses to be locked up. Many of our national holidays take place in commemoration of a battle that is lost and won. A feast, to be meaningful, must have a significant ending, a climax, a culmination, at the least a completion, to support it.

Even in animal society we may observe a trace of this fact. Anyone with a bit of farm experience has heard the delighted cackling of a chicken which has just laid an egg. Such a chicken celebrates the completion of a process. For a few minutes she will outcackle every chicken in the neighborhood; not even an animal can celebrate alone or in silence. The question we would raise here is: Does this phenomenon, to be observed both in human and animal society, go even farther back and do we find God himself celebrating? No one acquainted with the Bible will deny it.

God's Celebrations

THE first chapter of Genesis tells us how, phase upon phase, tier upon tier, God built up his universe until he arrived at the climactic product of his creativity: Man. But the second chapter, as by now we have learned to expect, caps the climax. For here we learn that God *rested*. The Supreme Artist, having put the finishing stroke on the canvas, now stands back and looks. He not only rests from, but he also rests in, his work. The Worker, blessedly creative as only He is creative, holds his flawless workmanship at arm's length and allows his restless creativity delightfully to come to rest in it. A human artist knows when he has, or when he has not, measured up to the original creative vision of his project. How intense is his enjoyment when his work turns out to be a true incarnation of that brain-bursting insight which, at first, ignited every creative cell in his body! How coarse, in comparison,

*Mr. Vriend is a student of Theology at the Free University of Amsterdam.

Reserved for Celebration — Continued

are the sentiments of a poet who wrote: "I celebrate *myself;* and what I assume you shall assume. . . . I am an acme of things accomplished. . . ." The delighted attention of the true artist, many-dimensional image as he is of the uncreated Original, will always, it seems to me, be directed outward and come to rest in things newly, rightly done. But even his celebration will be but a faint echo of what God "experienced" when a freshly finished cosmos was wheeled out of his workshop. God now entered his Sabbath and, having concreated time with all else, ordained a time-conditioned duplicate for man.

A completed creation, according to Scripture, is one reason for the Sabbath. Another is the Resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ. Evil days had fallen on the primordial day of delighting in the finished work of God; for century upon exhausting century, that day of rest had been a symbol of a true rest to be achieved in the re-establishment of original relationships. It was the work of God the Son to turn the symbol into reality. Dying, he like all others finished his work on the sixth day and entered into his rest; rising on the first day of the week, he unlike all others gave public notice that he had fulfilled the anticipatory thrust of Old Testament symbols. When the reality comes, the shadows of symbolism must flee. What remains is the ordinance of Paradise: Resting in the completed work of God which has now entered a new and critical phase. Since the corrective work of Christ has attained a climax, the stiff-jointed old Sabbath of the Jews must now take a walk from one end of the week to the other. Israel first worked for six days and then, exhausted and ready to admit the futility of its work, celebrated God's work. Christians begin the week with a celebration and then, refreshed and ready to admit the efficacy of God's work, fan out to their respective spheres of labor. There is a change in the rhythm. We are not only on the way to the End: the eternal Sabbath; but the End has been initiated and underlies all that we can now undertake. It is the history of redemption which conditioned the Jewish sabbath as it conditions ours. It is the history of redemption which changed the rhythm. The Church sensed the change and, after some hesitation, shifted from one day to the other.

A completed creation is one, a completed reconciliation is another reason for spiritual celebration. It would be sad indeed if we had now come to the end of the *raisons d' etre* of the Sabbath. For God's management of history has not yet reached its point of culmination. Human history being what it is — blood-stained, sweat-stained, and tear-stained — it cannot be a source of unmingled delight to God. Unable to rest in his works, God cannot as yet rest from his works. Ceaselessly our Lord Jesus Christ is at work, through the Spirit, to prepare his church for unceasing rest in realms beyond this history — to prepare both God's own and his church's unending Sabbath. Though man's work be not without pauses, as Schilder says,* his rest is still intermittent and rather negative. Rest without intermittency is the ultimate goal of God's plan for his children. But that condition can come only after God has wiped all blood from man's hands, all sweat from his forehead, all tears from his eyes (Rev. 7:17). Service without intermittency also is the ultimate goal of God's plan for his children (Rev. 7:15); for rest was never intended to be a negative cessation from work but rather a positive, uninterrupted celebration of God's completed work. But opportunity for such service and such celebration can come only when a wardrobe of white clothes will no longer be unbecoming to us. Rest and labor will then coincide.

The repetition of our present celebrations implies that we cannot yet uninterruptedly and fully enter the joy of our Lord over his finally completed work. Our temporal sabbaths, sin-infected as they are, still await fulfilment in an unending sabbath rest. There remains such a rest for the people of God (Hebr. 4:9). Of this prospect each Lord's Day is a picture. It is founded upon the End which came with the Resurrection; it anticipates the End which shall one day terminate our sin-conditioned labors. In the interim it is a recurring reminder that our destiny is to be with the Lord in his visible glory. But the necessity of a reminder points up the unsatisfactory aspects of our present Sabbath. We experience his absence as something painful; we experience our incapacity for celebration as something painful. In this phase of unfulfilment, repetition and unrest are inevitable. When the Spirit shall have finished his work in history, our Sabbath rest will be permanent, without intermission, and subject to no disability. Each Lord's Day is a confirmation that this day and this condition will come. More than re-establishing a piece of Paradise, it is a window which opens on the New Jerusalem — dimly perceived now but to be unveiled in the Day of the Lord.

*K. Schilder, *Wat is de Hemel?* pages 269ff., 1935.

On the first Sabbath, as we have seen, at the beginning of time, God the Father rested from the work of creation. On the second Sabbath, in the midst of the times, God the Son rested from the work of reconciliation. On the last Sabbath, at the end of time, God the Spirit will rest from his many faceted work. Our Sunday, as we shall see in the next paragraph, is a participation in this three-fold Trinitarian rest.

Participation in this Celebration

Of the Greek gods we know that they had frequent and boisterous celebrations. But they restricted their festivities to the crown of Mount Olympus. They remained rather clannishly aloof from the noise and dirt of human affairs. A great gulf was fixed between divine and human celebrations.

It was not and is not so with the living Lord of heaven and earth. He could have left man to the rhythm of nature: waking, sleeping, waking, sleeping. Instead he invited him to share according to the measure of man, the rhythm of creation: six periods of creative activity and one of rest. Thus God established a connection between his work and man's work, between his rest and man's rest, and between his progression from one to the other and man's progression from one to the other. This ordinance lifts man above nature and makes him a participant, be it on a created level, in the life of God.

This ordinance concerns every human being. We shall see below that at certain places and in certain periods of history, work was regarded as being beneath the dignity of true men. We must observe now that, at certain times, rest was regarded as too good for a certain class of people. Karl Barth, in a paragraph on the Sabbath ethic of Amesius, describes how the theories and stipulations of this strict Reformed

hinker were adjusted rather agreeably o the living standards of the ruling lasses. Aristocratic burghers, though ery punctilious in their personal obervance of the day, often had no cruples about putting their servants to trenuous employment on Sunday. Acording to Amesius, it is the employer, nd never the employee, who must lecide about the providential necesity of a given task. Servants must lefer to their superiors in the matter ven though they are not personally onvinced of this "providential necesity."

Thus the spirit of the fourth comnandment may be quenched. For this ommandment is of all its fellows the nost obviously democratic. It insists n an equal opportunity for all God's hildren to be free for him. It allows or no privileged participants in God's abbath. No one is to be excluded from he feast, neither thou, nor thy son, nor hy daughter, thy man-servant, nor thy naid-servants. . . . Here again we nay note a resemblance between the nclusiveness which marks God's cele rations and the spirit which characterzes, or ought to characterize, human easts. "The more the merrier" is not ust a joke. The spirit of a feast is such hat we drop our reserve toward one nother and become inclusive. Even he cattle in the corrals and the horses n the barn are to sniff a difference in he air and relish the relaxation asso iated with it. The Bible will risk even nother extension: there must be magnanimity toward the stranger — a erson perhaps unacquainted with Israel's distinctive code of laws but not or that reason excluded from the ircle of blessed influences.

* * *

The manner of this participation will e attuned to the point of advancement od has reached in the history of reemption. Common to Israel and the hurch are a day on which, a place at which, a people on whom, God's blessng is peculiarly active. For both the abbath provides a training-school in which God's people receive instruction n the ways of God, exercise themselves n doing the will of the Father by laying aside their own programs (Is. 58:13, 14), and confess before all the world heir attachment to him, since it is a *sign*, (Ex. 31:17). For both it means a eriodic release from the exhaustion ssociated, by a divine curse, with uman labor. But Israel was made trongly aware, also by its seventh-day celebration, of its being on the way to Salvation, whereas the New Testament Church ought to be strongly aware, also by its celebration on the first day of the week, of its being on the way from Salvation. Israel was blessed by a High Priest (Num. 6:22-27), a minister of symbols, whereas the Church receives its blessing from a prophet, a minister of the Word. A sharp contrast does not exist. For Israel, too, was on the way from a salvation at the beginning, the Exodus — the motivation for the Sabbath given in Deut. 5:15 — and we, too, are on the way to a salvation at the end of history. But the decisive difference is the Resurrection of the Way, the Truth, and the Life underlying the Sabbath celebrated in the new aeon.

At the beginning of this section we referred to the deism of Greek religion. Surely it is now evident that the Sabbath sounds the death-knell over any deistic traces we, imaginative sinners, have retained.

The Context of this Celebration

THE *fourth* commandment governs not just one lonely day out of seven but overarches, channels, informs, the whole of life. It legislates not only for the one but also for the six. It speaks to us not only of religion but also of culture, and insists upon both.

"Six days thou shalt labor." We have here, as I see it, a wholesome insistence upon work, a universal injunction to work, but also an awareness of the limitations of work. This affirmative, appreciative approach to work is in itself remarkable. I question whether in extra-biblical literature contemporary with Bible times or older there is anything like a "divine" imperative demanding regular and purposeful employment of all classes of people. Scepticism at this point is supported by several considerations. Pagan gods and goddesses devote a lot of their time getting entangled in love affairs or embroiled in wars, but their cultural effort, with the possible exception of Apollo, is not conspicuous. Of any demand that their devotees get busy and keep busy I have not found a trace. We do find the opposite. Oriental caste systems, as Prof. J. H. Bavinck has pointed out,* are built on the idea that the lower castes, which work, are involved in the illusion and vanity of this world, while the top caste, which does not, is in touch with ultimate reality. Closer proximity to their god means greater resemblance to him; and since he does not stir a finger, the upper caste has no great incentive to work either.

In Plato's ideal society the top-class thinks and governs, the middle-class engages in sports and military exercises, and the bottom group is left to the manual occupations. Now it is gratifying to see a middle-class devoted to the cultivation of courage — but why restrict work to people who are little better than slaves in a government-controlled work-camp? Plato does not stand alone, however, in his contempt for manual work. If someone had approached Socrates with the demand: "Six days thou shalt labor" he would probably have countered with a series of questions about that interesting number six and for the rest refer to his occupation as intellectual midwife. But even in Christian times there have been those who regarded contemplation as something *higher* than action. Wherever people have a static concept of God, they will sit and gaze; but wherever human eyes are opened to the God of history, to the God who works "even until now" (John 5:17), there will be no odor of degradation about work.

There is nothing despicable about work. By God's grace we have capacities for work and by his injunction we are called to work. We must remember but one thing: not to put our faith in work. The number six is the symbol of incompleteness in Scripture. It is just one unit short of seven. The number of man without God is a multiple of six. Six days of labor are meaningless if the seventh be a vacuum. Therefore we are to put our faith in the works of God, which alone can provide a solid basis for our work. That one day of dedicated rest alone can undergird those six days of dedicated work. Just as God plucked Abraham from among his relatives that in him all the nations of the earth might be blessed, so he plucked this day from among six others that it might serve as a funnel through which his blessings might flow into the rest of the week. But the six days can no more give meaning to the seventh than culture can undergird religion.

* * *

In a concluding article I shall sketch the attitude of Jesus and Paul to the Sabbath, and shall suggest how we can best keep holy the day reserved for celebration.

*In: De Zegen van den Arbeid

LETTERS TO THE JOURNAL

Four Times?

June 7, 1955

DEAR SIRS:

It was a pleasure that I read Dr. James Daane's article "At Least Four Times a Year," in last month's issue. It is on a worthwhile subject, and ought to be thoughtfully considered.

It was especially interesting to me because we at Ridgewood Church did a considerable amount of thinking last year about this very matter. As a result more frequent Communion services were scheduled for this year. Perhaps other consistories have done the same. If so, the generalization that "all the 466 Christian Reformed Churches keep the rule in its minimum" is a bit too sweeping.

Our hope that more frequent Communion would mean a richer experience of God's grace has been realized richly. This year we scheduled six Communion services: five at morning services, one on Good Friday evening. This enables the great majority of the members of the congregation not only to enjoy more frequent Communion, but to do so with the entire worshipping congregation. Nursery service enables most parents to attend together. For the few who must alternate attendance, added opportunity is afforded to communicate with the whole congregation.

In a sense, it is not a new thing to have more frequent Communion. That such was the practice of the apostolic Church is clear from The Acts, in which we read that believers "continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship and in breaking of bread, and in prayers." John Calvin devoutly wished for a weekly celebration, believing that it was established by our Saviour, "in order to be frequently celebrated by all Christians, that they might often call to mind the sufferings of Christ, the recollection of which would sustain and strengthen their faith, would incite them to sing praises to God, and to confess and celebrate his goodness, and would cherish in their hearts, and promote the mutual exercise of that charity, the bond of which they would see in the unity of the body of Christ" (*Institutes*, Bk. IV, Chapter XVII, xliv).

It would seem that, in view of the fact that the Lord's Supper is so closely associated with the Word of God, and that the grace of God abounds when the Sacrament is devoutly received, it would mean the deepening and elevation of the spiritual life of our churches if we communicated more frequently.

Fraternally yours,
Seymour Van Dyken
Ridgewood, N. J.

SUBSCRIPTION BLANK *Issued Monthly — $2.00 per Year*

The Reformed Journal

255 Jefferson S. E. — Grand Rapids 3, Mich.

Please send *The Reformed Journal* to:

NAME .....

ADDRESS .....

CITY ..... STATE .....

Start with ..... issue

Mail bill to .....

"General Revelation"

". . . our point of departure must h the fact that all our knowledge con cerning general revelation is base upon indeed, *must* be based upon, th Holy Scriptures. That surely does no mean to say that we arrive at a tech nical knowledge of nature through th Holy Scriptures or that they are th proper source for our knowledge in th natural sciences.

"We have in mind only that, in th most profound sense, no true know edge of the revelation of God in th works of his hands is obtainable wit out faith in Christ. Calvin's referenc to the glasses (of faith) as the on means whereby we can know God i this book of "nature," is of decisiv significance for all reflection on gener revelation. This is not a question o our knowledge of nature as such, b rather of our knowledge of God's se revelation. Stated otherwise, in Do matics general revelation is not to b regarded (in isolation) as an indepen ent object of study. Reflection on do ma is in principle different from acti ity in the natural sciences."

* * *

"Only from a scriptural point view can the relationship betwe general and special revelation be right understood; only then is it possible oppose all sorts of dangers which ha continually threatened the church an theology. For in this manner gener and special revelation do not stan beside or opposite each other as duality in a relationship of rivalry an competition (the natural and the supe natural), but they find their unity the sovereign activity of God. Nor is possible to do justice to this distincti by abstract reasoning from a conce of revelation in general and then pr ceeding to special revelation as t logical individuation of this gene revelation. Such logical deduction c tainly never was the intent of Reform theology. The distinction between 'ge eral' and 'special' revelation is relat to the fact that the universal activ of God is seen to manifest a revelato activity of God which extends to t entire world and to all men."

— G. C. BERKOUW
in *Studies in Dogmatics*
General Revelati